



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Third Session

Standing Committee  
on the  
Economy

Minimum Wage Policy Review

Monday, April 12, 2010  
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 27-3-6

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The 27th Legislature  
Third Session**

**Standing Committee on the Economy**

Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC), Chair  
Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (Ind), Deputy Chair

Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)  
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (Ind)  
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)  
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)\*  
Hinman, Paul, Calgary-Glenmore (WA)  
Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)  
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)  
Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (AL)  
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
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[Mr. Bhardwaj in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome. I'd like to call the meeting to order. I'm just going to ask everyone around the table to introduce themselves, please, starting with Mr. Lund.

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you. Ty Lund, Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Marz:** Richard Marz, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Amery:** Moe Amery, Calgary-East.

**Mr. Weadick:** Greg Weadick, Lethbridge-West.

**Dr. Taft:** Kevin Taft, Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Dean:** Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

**Dr. Massolin:** Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

**Ms Sorensen:** Rhonda Sorensen, manager of communications services.

**Ms Stein:** Rachel Stein, research officer, Legislative Assembly Office.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Guy Boutilier, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Kyle Fawcett, Calgary-North Hill.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Teresa Woo-Paw, Calgary-Mackay.

**Ms Rempel:** Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Just a note for the record. Pursuant to Standing Order 56(2.1) to (2.4) Mr. Griffiths is substituting for Mr. Allred. He is not here right now, but when he comes in, we will introduce him.

Just moving along with the agenda, if we can approve the agenda, please. If I can have you take a look at the agenda, I need somebody to move it. Okay. Thank you very much, Greg. All in favour? Thank you very much.

We need to approve the minutes from the previous meetings, and we've got lots of minutes to approve. I think they were circulated to you. You've all got copies of that. We're going to go as far back as the October 6, 2008, meeting of the Standing Committee on the Economy. Actually, the way we need to do this is that only the people who attended all the meetings or who were at that meeting can move the motion to adopt the minutes. That particular meeting was attended by Moe Amery, Richard, and Greg. If I can ask one of you guys to move it, please. Richard moves it. We don't need seconds, right? Okay. Thank you very much. All in favour of October 6, 2008? Any questions or concerns?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Chair, for the record it's important to note that some members of the Legislative Assembly were not members of the committee at that time.

**The Chair:** Fair enough. Thank you very much.

The next one we're approving is the April 14, 2009, meeting of the Standing Committee on the Economy. Who was there for that particular one? Mr. Amery moves that, then. Any questions? All in favour? Everybody okay with that? Thank you very much.

The following meetings: April 20, 21, 22, 28. Mr. Amery attended all of them. Have you had the opportunity to take a look at the minutes? Any questions?

**Dr. Taft:** Just to be clear since I made some motions, apparently, at these meetings but I wasn't present, were those motions made by Dave Taylor in my name?

**Ms Rempel:** Yes, several times. That was how they were read into the record.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. It doesn't . . .

**Mr. Amery:** Yeah, it says here.

**Dr. Taft:** On behalf. Right. Good. Yeah, it's above there.

**The Chair:** We're good with that, Dr. Taft?

**Dr. Taft:** They were darned good motions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Okay. All in favour? Okay. Anyone opposing? Thank you. It's all carried.

The next one. We're moving on to February 16, 2010, and February 22, 23, 24 and March 09, 2010. The following people attended all of them: Moe, Ty, Richard, Teresa, and Mr. Boutilier. Okay. Ty moves it. Any questions? Everybody okay with that? All in favour? Okay. It's carried. Thank you very much.

The agenda itself, ladies and gentlemen, is fairly long. I'm just going to go through some of the preliminary discussions which sort of premised this meeting today. I'll talk a bit about the objective of what we're going to be doing, and then we'll open the floor for questions and anything you want to add.

Basically, the overarching objective is to come up with a sound recommendation to give the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. We need to come up with clear and concise minimum wage policy recommendations that will be fair to both employees and employers and provide some predictability to both groups. Those proposals will include a structured plan which will work both in good and bad economic times.

It is through consultation with stakeholders that we will construct the recommendations. We must not restrict this conversation by excluding any relevant stakeholders. What is being done in other jurisdictions must be taken into account as well as other examples, which includes indexing different wages for different industries or level of work experience and thorough and timely reviews of situations. We must also examine the frequency of minimum wage adjustments and our future inquiries into the policy.

In addition, this committee may want to produce more than one option and recommendation. We will discuss the timeline of our work in a little bit, but we must remember that the minister has asked us to table our report no later than the end of September to give him ample time to review and respond accordingly. Our objectives have been set and handed to us, and I believe that this committee has the right resources at our disposal to emerge from our discussions through the policy recommendations. I look forward to the discussions.

Basically, that's what the sort of premise is. All of you guys have this, probably in a memo, and you've had the opportunity to read and have a peek at it.

If we just move on to item 4, then, on the agenda because we've done the first three. The nature of the inquiry we basically outlined, 52.07(2).

In the discussion items is presentation from department officials. How is the committee thinking? Do we need to invite somebody from the Department of Employment and Immigration to sort of give us a perspective on what's happening across Canada in other jurisdictions, where we are with this? How do you guys feel about that? That's the first item which we're going to be discussing.

**Mr. Marz:** I think it's important to get information from other jurisdictions, but I think it's also important, when we're talking to them, that we talk to the stakeholders' experience on it, both the workers as well as the employers. Has there been evidence, you know – when the minimum wage goes too high, how has that affected employment? Has employment gone down as a result of it or gone up? I think that type of information would be helpful. We hear that all the time, especially in jurisdictions that have had higher minimum wages than we do. How has that affected employment?

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Yes, sir. Guy.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to build on Mr. Marz's point, I think that information is important for this committee to review, but in light of the fact that it's my understanding the Minister of Employment and Immigration is looking for recommendations, first have his department staff present relative to that. I think the minister should be able to ask his department staff that on his time and their time as opposed to the committee's time. Even though I think the information is valuable, what I'm perhaps more interested in – and I'm sure each of you would agree from an MLA's perspective – would be what a chamber of commerce believes, what the stakeholders of small business believe in light of the tremendous changes that have taken place in the economy over the last year and a half and the impact they may or may not have, positive or negative, on our decisions that we recommend.

I would prefer that we get back to the root of our communities as MLAs. I'm certainly open to suggestions on what stakeholders Mr. Marz talked about that we should have, but I'm quite certain that if there is a call – I don't think, Mr. Chair, there's been a call for stakeholders' participation at this point.

6:40

**The Chair:** Mr. Boutilier, I'm just going through the agenda. I'm just going item by item. If you look in there, there will be an invitation, and we will ask the committee who we need to invite and how we want the presentations. So give me a minute or so, and we will come to exactly your point.

Right now the question which is really being discussed is: should we invite somebody from the ministry to sort of give us an overview as to what's happening and what's happening across the different jurisdictions? That's the point being discussed right now.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Okay. So let me conclude. My answer would be no, I don't think that's required at this point in light of the fact that we're asking for recommendations. I think it would be more highly acceptable to be asking Albertans and those stakeholders you made reference to, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Next, Dr. Taft.

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to differ a little bit with the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** So much for you coming to the independent caucus.

**Dr. Taft:** What I'd be interested to hear from the department is: were there problems? Why did this come forward? What was the problem? What prompted the minister? Did they tell something to the minister: gee, this is creating these following problems, a, b, c, or whatever they are? That might help us figure out: well, okay, what problems were you trying to solve? It's not clear to me.

**The Chair:** So you'll be in favour of inviting somebody from there?

**Dr. Taft:** In highest respect to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, we may want to curtail what the department tells us. As he says, the minister can turn to them and get advice, but I as a member of this committee would like to know from them what the problems are that were caused by the current situation. I have to be honest. I don't know why this issue is at this committee. I don't know what prompted the minister. I think it was a 12-cent increase in minimum wage that was planned. Is that what prompted this whole process?

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

**Mr. Lund:** I guess I differ a little bit as well from my friend from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I would be very anxious to hear what other jurisdictions are doing and the impact that that has. Now, that doesn't mean to say that we would be necessarily following it, but I think that what we would then be able to do when we do have presenters come to us – and I hope that will be the process, not all written, because I want to have the opportunity to ask questions. If we have that knowledge base of what has been the experience in some other jurisdictions, then we perhaps could ask more pointed questions of our presenters. That would be my big reason for wanting to hear what is happening in other jurisdictions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Teresa.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also agree that we should hear from a full spectrum of stakeholders on the issue so that we can have a comprehensive view of the issues and trends and possible solutions. However, I do believe that it would be beneficial for us to hear from either the ministry or other research units so that we have a better understanding of the current state, to have a sort of picture of the current profile of some of the minimum wage earners so that we have a good understanding of the profile, as well as what other jurisdictions are doing. I think it will be helpful to start with that kind of overview.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Moe.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I really don't want to repeat what has been said already, but I do agree with Dr. Taft. I mean, what is the problem with the present system that we have so that we are here contemplating a change or a discussion or a review? On the other hand, again, I'd like to know what is happening in other jurisdictions and if the department has been monitoring what is happening there and if they have changed it or reviewed it or done something to it.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Moe.  
Greg.

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you. I just wanted to say that I agree with everything I've heard today. I always wanted to say that. For me information on other jurisdictions is probably some of the least important information. I don't really care what's happening in Ontario or Quebec with respect to minimum wage as they have to go through a process to set theirs. I think what we're trying to do here is to come up with a fair process in the long term, to set minimum wage so that it is fair to both employers and employees.

I would like to get a presentation from the ministry to ensure that – I think Kevin Taft hit the nail on the head. We want to make sure we know what questions we're actually trying to answer. That doesn't mean we can't look into some other issues as well and maybe even bring forward some recommendations beyond that, but to not meet the expectations of the minister would be wrong because he's come to us requesting that we do this. I would like to hear from them and also get whatever background information so that we're starting with that information to go forward, to not go out and plow those same fields, trying to dredge up information that they may have readily available, that's easy to present, so we can start from a point of having all the basics. I think that could save us a lot of time. We have a fairly short schedule to meet with all the different folks, so I think we should get that presentation and get it fairly quickly if we can.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Is it fair to assume, then, that everyone is kind of in favour of getting a presentation?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Sure. That's great.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Okay. Then can we start working with the department at their earliest convenience or the earliest we can get them here and sort of set those broad guidelines as we discussed here. They'll come and make a presentation, and I think they'll probably be open for questions as well. If you have questions, they should be able to answer them. Okay. Thank you very much.

Moving on, the second part of that would be the committee research support. Some of the things we also need to finalize today, ladies and gentlemen, are identification of stakeholders. Phil Massolin's committee, the research, have come up with a tentative list of stakeholders. Anything could be added to it, taken away, whatever we'd like to do. It's fairly wide open. As we're going through the agenda items, we can discuss them: the modes of presentation and submissions and all of that. For now we have a list, which we can distribute. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Marz:** It looks like a pretty comprehensive list.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Does anyone have any questions or concerns?

**Dr. Taft:** I've taken a very quick look here, and just for the record 1 is business associations; 2, chambers of commerce and taxpayer associations; 3, custodial; 4, beverage; 5, hospitality; 6, retail; 7, labour; 8, child care; 9, disability; 10, immigrant; 11, student; 12, social planning and think tanks; 13, academic; and 14, legal. My fundamental concern – and maybe I'm alone in this feud – is that I thought minimum wage was in part to address issues of poverty and income disparity, so I would suggest this is very, very heavily biased and one side of this equation. There are no poverty groups here that

I know of. Maybe they don't exist or we can't find them, but I bet they're out there.

I would suggest that we also consider expanding the list of academics. Right now they're both economists, and I think there's a much broader issue. I would particularly urge us to seek input from people who look at social determinants of health. There's very large and important literature on the correlation between poverty, disparity, and ill health. It's fascinating, it's important, and we should tap into that. This is, to me, only a beginning of a list of stakeholders.

6:50

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Taft.

**Mr. Weadick:** Two quick things I noticed. We have a lot of Calgary and Edmonton, and I want to make sure we get rural Alberta involved. I noticed both the chambers from Calgary and Edmonton and some others associations from Calgary and Edmonton. But there's probably a bigger impact in many of the small centres, the rural, mid-sized cities and rural communities, where probably a lot of people are actually working at this level. I would ask that we broaden that to include associations and chambers from rural and maybe an agriculture association. I don't know how many people are working within ag. I didn't notice a manufacturing industry association here, but there may be some Alberta manufacturers or fast food. I don't know if they have one.

I did notice that the only student group we have is out of Ottawa, and I think we can do better than that. We have CAUS in Alberta, Alberta university students. We have the college group that meets as well. I'd much rather approach our local student organizations in Alberta than be seen to go to Ottawa and try to get something from the Canadian alliance.

Those would be my recommendations from a perspective of making sure we include both rural and local associations as opposed to national.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Fawcett:** I'd just make my comments brief. I think this is a pretty good, comprehensive list. You know, I guess that if Dr. Taft could maybe bring forward some groups that he would suggest. I think what this tried to target is some groups that might be subject to poverty or more likely to be in a minimum wage job such as disability, immigrants, students, that sort of thing. But we might need a group that's broader in nature as well.

**Dr. Taft:** I can follow up.

**The Chair:** Through the committee clerk.

**Dr. Taft:** All right.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Guy.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think these are good ideas by Greg, Kevin, and Kyle. I think that's helpful.

My sense would be that when you talk about rural, other than Edmonton and Calgary obviously, you know, there are also about six medium-sized cities such as yours, Lethbridge, which is just under a hundred thousand people. I think it's really often that we don't want to ensure that they're dwarfed by the bigger centres, obviously, with a million people in Calgary and Edmonton. I strongly recom-

mend that in terms of chambers of commerce both rural and medium-sized cities would be included because the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce views could be very different than the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce views or the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce views. So I think that's a good recommendation as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Another thing which came up was circulation through the MLAs. All MLAs through their constituency newsletters or, you know, their resources could also send this information out and make people aware that this is what's going on as well.

Okay. Moving on, then. You will compile a list. Like I said, these are all kind of decision items, so we gather that the list will be updated. Whoever has got some information they'd like to add onto it, please provide it through the committee clerk, and then we can start to send the information out.

A question? Go ahead, Ty, please.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, I just noticed the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, the Western Convenience Stores Association. What would be the purpose of inviting them? Is it to try to get a feel for what minimum wage does in other jurisdictions? Quite frankly, there's an Alberta association of restaurants. That exists. There's the Alberta grocers association. I think that for a lot of these that we are looking at from outside the province, there is a component in Alberta. I'm not sure the reason for these. There could be some value in having these outside ones inasmuch as we started talking about this very issue to get a feel for what happens if you raise it and go beyond what the industry can bear. Maybe there's some value in having that. I'm just questioning it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Any discussion on that?

**Mr. Marz:** My question was on the timetable, but I see that's probably best under the next topic.

**The Chair:** Yeah. A little bit later on. Thank you.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Two points. One is that I believe that up to 70 per cent of the minimum wage earners are women, so I think that maybe we could explore contacting, inviting some women's groups to be part of our stakeholders' list. Also, there were two employment-focused immigrant groups formed in Alberta recently. One is the Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council, and the other one is the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council, and there's a broad-based group called the Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary, that you may want to consider adding to this list.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Teresa.

Is there anybody else that wants to add something to it? Okay. We'll go ahead and compile the list, then. Thank you very much.

The next one. A couple of information items. We have cross-jurisdictional analysis and materials required to assist the committee. I'm going to ask Phil Massolin to elaborate on that a little bit, please.

**Dr. Massolin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to working with the committee on refining that and adding to the stakeholders' list, the LAO's research staff is prepared to work for the committee throughout its review here providing research support. One of the things that we can do for the committee if the committee so directs is to provide information on minimum wage legislation and other aspects of minimum wage, the impact of minimum wage in other

jurisdictions if the committee would like that. We could also provide other research support in terms of summarizing written submissions, again, should the committee wish to undertake that sort of endeavour as well.

The LAO research staff is here as well to help the committee with writing its report, that's ultimately going to be tabled in the Assembly, and any other research tasks that the committee directs. I just wanted to point that out, Mr. Chair, that we're here to support this committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Any questions for Phil? Go ahead, Dr. Taft.

**Dr. Taft:** How do we take advantage of that offer? If I wanted something done to look at income disparity in provinces across Canada or – I don't know – just something, how do we do that?

**The Chair:** Through the chair. For anything you need to do, anything you need research on, it basically is driven by the committee here. Discuss it here, and bring it forward. As a committee, through the chair, we can ask the research group to come up with it. Absolutely.

**Dr. Taft:** Terrific. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions on that? Okay.

Moving on to our next point, then. It's about the public input, general and stakeholders, and the submissions process. We are going to sort of take a look at the input end of it first.

**Dr. Massolin:** Sorry. May I just interject, Mr. Chair? Just before we move on to that, may I get direction from the committee on whether or not we should be preparing this cross-jurisdictional comparison for the next meeting?

**The Chair:** Okay. I guess I'll pose that question. What's the will of the committee?

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Yes? Okay.

Yes, sir.

**Dr. Massolin:** So just for clarity, get some information on the legislation as well as what the minimum wage is?

**Mr. Weadick:** Yes, please, and how it's set and what it is.

**Dr. Massolin:** Okay. Thank you.

7:00

**The Chair:** Any other questions? Anything else you would like research to do? Okay. Thank you very much.

Moving on, then, to public input. Two, I guess, key areas we're targeting are general public and the stakeholders. Is there anything else we need to discuss there? Pretty broad, but it could be specific if you have anything else in mind.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, I'm only wondering about location. I was on one of these committees before, and we actually went to Calgary and held a day down there. I think that if we're going to do public presentations and invite the public in to one here in Edmonton, then we should be going to Calgary as well.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Actually, that's part of our next agenda item, but right now are we good with the stakeholders? Are you okay with the stakeholders, the public and that?

**Mr. Lund:** I think we've got to let the general public in. Then this list would be refined further, added to and/or deleted.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks, Ty.

In terms of the submissions process what kind of submissions are we looking for? Written submissions, presentations, appearance, and the deadline: these four things we need to discuss.

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, Naresh, I think probably we should get written first because it's going to be the quickest way to get feedback from a lot of these organizations. If we can get the written, we may start to see some general directions that people are going that we could then take forward to a couple of public meetings where we could meet with folks to see if it's reflective of what they believe.

I think the big challenge is going to be the staff issue around wading through the feedback. If you start getting online people answering and you get a few thousand of these, somebody is going to have to have the time to review it all, so unless we're going to ask very specific questions and specific answers, it's going to be pretty wild feedback that's going to have to be reviewed.

**Mr. Fawcett:** I certainly don't think we want public presentations from all these stakeholder groups. That could be very onerous as well. I would think that a lot of them are going to be providing a lot of the same type of information. If we could get original submissions and then have the committee sort of look those over and start to have some themes emerge and then decide whether we want to bring them in for further information or to explore a particular theme or which organizations or couple of organizations might be best to present on a particular theme that's emerging from these, I think that that is the best way to go and the best way to manage our resources and time as a committee.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Marz:** I wonder if it would be helpful to have a bit of a guide or questionnaire for presenters in the written submissions to do a sort of check-off on certain questions. Otherwise, it's predictable. Those that are on the payroll are going to want more money. That's the input that you're going to get. Those that are paying it are predictably going to say, "Well, it could cost some jobs," or "I'm going to close my business down as a result of it."

I think that if there are some questions developed, it might be a bit helpful. Yeah, it would be nice to have \$20 an hour as a minimum wage, but if you have no job at all, you know, where is the trade-off? Otherwise, you're going to get exactly what you get back home in your constituency. Everybody that's working at minimum wage wants it substantially higher, but a lot of these small businesses that are paying the minimum wage, especially in the service sector: what I hear from them all the time is that they're not making much more, if any, than minimum wage themselves.

I've got businesses in my riding that have actually closed the doors because they couldn't keep them open: two restaurants in one town because they couldn't make a go of it. So I think a bit of a guide might be a little bit helpful for people to go through and just check off some things because otherwise you're going to get a very predictable response and thousands of them.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Taft:** A guide is not a bad idea. I don't know who'd develop that. I mean, that becomes very important. I'm not convinced of Mr. Fawcett's position, and I'm more inclined towards Mr. Lund's in terms of having presentations. I do like the idea of being able to ask questions, you know, and see somebody eye to eye and say, "Well, what do you really mean," especially if we find things are falling into two camps or something and we want to get past that. I think having questions is important in a discussion.

I also think that requiring written approvals biases the process a bit towards people and organizations who have the skills and resources to prepare and submit written proposals. That might discourage, for example, immigrant groups. It might discourage single parents from coming forward. That sort of thing.

It's a balancing act here, but I would think that in two or three days of public hearings, if we wanted to go that way, I mean, if we keep the presentations to 20 minutes or something, we can go through a lot in one day. I'm a little more open to the public exchange than just the written material, myself.

**The Chair:** On the point, Richard?

**Mr. Marz:** Yeah, on this point. Dr. Taft brings up some important issues, but if low-income people want to make a submission on their own, they may not be able to afford to travel to get to a place like Calgary or Edmonton, especially from rural Alberta, let alone take the time off. Maybe a written proposal is the only way they can make a presentation, and they may not just want to leave it to some organization that wants to speak on their behalf. I think we've got to do both.

I like the idea of asking questions, too, in the public presentations. That's why I thought of developing a questionnaire type of thing for the written ones. It might not be as comprehensive a questioning, but it would provoke some better responses from the people that are sending in written submissions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Teresa and then Kyle.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering whether we can explore the possibility of utilizing the video conferencing abilities of our public libraries so that people in rural areas can do presentations by video conferencing. Can we explore that?

**Ms Rempel:** I think certainly we could do that just as it exists right now. This facility here in Edmonton is set up for teleconferencing, which a lot of you have used in the past. It is also set up for video conferencing, so as long as these individuals at the other end are able to be someplace that can manage teleconferencing, like the library, we could receive it in Edmonton. We would be set up for that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just trying to come up with some conclusions here. It's the will of the committee, then, to begin with the written submissions? Am I hearing it correctly? Begin with written submissions, then have the research staff sort of come up with themes, then allow whoever wants to make an oral presentation or whoever does not can be okay with the written submissions: is that the will of the committee?

**Mr. Amery:** What is the deadline for the written submissions?

**The Chair:** We'll discuss that a little bit. We have that. We have a timeline.

**Mr. Amery:** Okay. Are you going to have the written submissions first?

**The Chair:** I'm asking you. Whatever you want is what will be done.

**Dr. Taft:** I don't mind if we do written submissions first and open it up to public presentations after, but I do think there is some wisdom in Richard's comments about having some kind of a guide. My question is who develops that guide because that becomes the first step, you know, if we're advertising or whatever; please address the following six points. I don't know how we develop that before we even get to the written submissions.

7:10

**Mr. Fawcett:** This gets into the timeline piece. I'm wondering if maybe we want to get the presentation from the minister's department officials first and have us as a committee set out some broad things that we would like to see in that discussion or that guide for committee staff to go put something together for the committee's approval at the next meeting, at which time we could go get submissions.

You know, I just want to say that I guess I'm open to having any group that wants to come in and present to us as well. I just always prefer when they also leave a written submission because as we get along through the time, you tend to forget what certain groups presented if there's not a written thing to sort of start to compare.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Weadick:** I kind of agree with what Dr. Taft said. I think what we should do is have written submissions but allow people the opportunity to either request to be part of making a presentation or invite some of the key stakeholders and start working towards that now, understanding that we'll probably want to get written from the public because you don't want every person in Calgary or Edmonton coming in to tell us. There are some key stakeholders we probably want to be able to look in the eye and ask some questions and hear from them. I think we can start to twin track both, getting the public input and a process to hear from those stakeholders, both written and then, if they would like to present, an opportunity to do that.

Probably, once we get this list made, send a letter saying, "Please make a written submission" and "Would you be interested in coming to a public presentation to support that or clarify what you've written?" with the stakeholders, and then offer the public a chance to do written. If we see the interest, we may decide to go to two or three communities and hold a public opportunity for those folks to come out and talk to us.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, I kind of like what Richard had to say about a questionnaire because that would be a quick way of getting, probably, more responses in that we could understand. It's not just a bunch of questions. You could have some information. What we found before is that when you do get into the conversation with the public, there are a lot of things that they don't understand. Once you explain to them what the current situation is or what exactly we're talking about, then they change somewhat.

If we could start with the questionnaire and then get this list of organizations because they've got the capacity to put together a presentation, then we can develop some themes through that information and then decide whether we're going to open it up. I

will be pushing for having some open hearings. That, I think, is extremely important because at the end of the day if you don't give everybody the opportunity, you're going to be criticized as having manipulated the process and come up with something that they may not agree with.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Ty.  
Guy, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Very good points.

I want to draw to the committee members' attention what appears to be the letter to the chair from, I guess, the new minister, Thomas Lukaszuk. I think that appears to be the starting point of the very discussion we're having tonight. I went through it at great length to determine what comments have been shed to the committee members on the direction, and all I have drawn from it, according to the minister, is simply this: "in light of the current economic climate" and "I feel this is also the right time."

Before we go down the road we're going, I would think it would be incumbent upon this committee to ask the author of this very letter, the minister responsible what he means when he says, "I feel." You know, I have different feelings every day. All I can gather from this letter is that he feels the time is right, so I would like to understand, through the chair: how did he come up with this feeling? Based on what did he come up with this feeling?

Before we go and solicit Albertans about what they think and all of the great work that's been done on stakeholders, I think it's incumbent upon the committee, first, to be asking the author of this letter, "What did you mean when you said, 'I feel'?" and also a question on "in light of." What does "in light of" mean? One small step that's missing in this discussion is a dialogue with this committee and the author of this letter. I would strongly suggest and encourage members, with the utmost respect, that we have that discussion before we go forward with the next steps, which may well be. But I think we first of all should be asking those questions about what "I feel" and "in light of the current" mean. That's all I gathered from the letter unless there's more information I'm not aware of.

**The Chair:** Kyle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. I would assume that as part of inviting the department to present, the minister would also be invited to present with his department officials. If that assumption is correct, I think you've talked yourself into the first thing that you were opposing here at the meeting.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Chair, to Kyle. I draw a very clear distinction between an elected official appointed to Executive Council by the Premier of this province and someone who is a civil servant. I see two very separate – one is elected, and the other is not elected. The understanding I have is that it's political leaders who determine the direction, not nonelected officials. That's why I draw this specific distinction.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Chair, I guess the way that most legislative committees work and if we look at the estimates that we've done through our policy field committees, the minister has always been there with his department officials. I mean, we could deal with that issue right now. Maybe we're not done with it. So we invite the minister and any officials from his department that he needs there to



support him to have a prior discussion, as I mentioned, before we go to writing any particular guide or questionnaire.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Mr. Chair, a good point. I do not want to make any assumptions about anything in this political business I've been in for 14 years. I think it's a good suggestion to ask the minister. He can bring a hundred officials if he wishes, but at the end of the day the buck stops with the minister.

**The Chair:** Richard, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, I've read over the minister's letter a number of times, and I don't find it all that befuddling or bewildering in today's economic climate. We're in the midst of a recession. Wages have been basically frozen in many parts of the private sector and many parts of the public sector. MLA wages have been frozen for the second year in a row, and I think there have been overtures by other ministers or indications to the public sector that we can't sustain increases going out if we're going to live within our budget.

So when the minister says, you know, "In light of this economic climate," we don't know when the recession is going to magically end. You talk to people in the United States; they're very optimistic on some fronts, and other parts of the country are not so optimistic. They feel it could be years before they're out of it. As our major trading partner that could translate to years before we're out of it. There's a lot of uncertainty. Basically, what he's saying is: it's uncertain. He'd like to have some direction, and he's looking to us to seek out some information on this to help guide him. I don't find it all that befuddling that he has asked us to do that.

**Dr. Taft:** Just to try to bring this to a conclusion, I would suggest the following steps, building on what people have said. Invite the minister to talk to us, and either directly in conjunction with him or right after department officials can talk to us; we get information from our committee researchers; and on the basis of that, we develop the questionnaire that Richard talked about. We'll know: "Okay. Here are the key problems. When you submit your material, answer these. Please consider addressing these issues." We get that clear, and then we put out a request for written submissions, and then we follow that, ultimately, with public presentations. You know, it's a fairly clear process. Then the hard part begins, trying to make sense of it all.

I think six points: starting with the minister, the department, our own committee researchers, develop the questions, ask for written submissions, and then do the public meetings. I would suggest that.

7:20

**The Chair:** Okay. Is everybody okay with that?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Agreed. A great idea.

**The Chair:** Richard, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Marz:** Could members of the committee, then, be thinking of potential questions they would like to see in a questionnaire to bring to the next meeting? Timing is of the essence here, and we need to feed that to our researchers so they can get that developed for us and get it back to us.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. Thanks, Richard.

Should we, then, start taking a look at some tentative dates perhaps when we can invite the minister and the staff, maybe even together, to come and make a presentation and you can ask them

questions, get it done? We're sort of looking at – and it's wide open again – the week of April 19 through 26 for a briefing from Employment and Immigration and to sort of generate a question for the committee researchers, something along that line. Would that work? Well, obviously, we'll poll on availability. I think we had a request not to hold meetings on Monday nights.

**Mr. Marz:** Not the 23rd.

**The Chair:** April 19 or 26.

**Mr. Marz:** Or the 26th. Oh, I thought you meant everything inclusive, the 19th to the 26th.

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Chair, I suggest that in good chairmanship – we're not going to resolve it in here, but keeping to that tone of what you're suggesting, see what ends up, and everyone do their best to be here.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Okay. Then just moving on, I think I want to get it as much out of the way as we possibly can on this first meeting. Then as we move forward, we can get through the agenda a lot quicker.

In terms of the advertisement I think you've got a draft of tentative advertising.

**Ms Sorensen:** It doesn't include questions.

**The Chair:** No, it doesn't include the questions, but it's a tentative draft of what could be advertised, and then we can add some questions in there if need be.

Kyle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yes. Just going back to our meetings, I would assume that as long as we're still in session, our meetings will be at 6:30, but once we're out of session, will our meetings revert to afternoon meetings? I guess that for us that are out of town, that's important because we like to get back to our constituencies for the evenings.

**Mr. Weadick:** We're here for the CPC on the Economy on the 26th, which is almost the same group except for the opposition members.

**Mr. Boutilier:** I don't know. Kevin, are you going to the CPC that day?

**Dr. Taft:** I'd sure like to.

**Mr. Boutilier:** You're not missing too much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Moving on, guys. I don't want to really derail this conversation, Guy. I just want to keep it on topic here.

We've got a draft advertisement we can share with you that was developed through the research people. We can hand that out. Have a peek at it, and for the next meeting, as Richard suggested, come up with some questions you want to add to it. Are two weeks sufficient for the advertisement? Once it's been finalized – obviously, it's not going to be up to the chair and the vice-chair to finalize it; it'll be done through the committee.

Rhonda.

**Ms Sorensen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to point out that the draft ad that will be circulated is a fairly standard approach that we've used in other committees. It does not take into account the discussions that have happened around the table. The suggested timelines and whatnot: you know, please don't take them to heart. They're simply suggestions that we can build upon.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Absolutely. Okay.  
Richard, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Marz:** Where is this ad going to show up?

**The Chair:** That we're going to discuss.

**Mr. Marz:** Not everybody in the city gets the *Mountain View* news.

**The Chair:** No. Fair enough.  
Once this has been circulated, I'm going to turn it over to Rhonda to actually answer that very question. Rhonda, go ahead, please. Where would this be circulated? That's part of our communication plan.

**Ms Sorensen:** The recommendation that we would be making should the committee choose to want to advertise for written submissions and/or leave the door open to invite oral submissions: we would be looking to advertise in Alberta weeklies through the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association – that covers 110 publications throughout the province, reaching over 900,000 Albertans – as well as the nine dailies that cover our province.

The estimated cost for the ad that you're looking at. Now, again, this could change if we are adding questionnaire information. The ad could be bigger, or we could approach it by pointing people to the website for a questionnaire to keep the size down and the cost down. The overall cost for a campaign of this size would be \$30,500.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Amery:** Have you considered advertising in the ethnic newspapers?

**Ms Sorensen:** There are some ethnic newspapers that are a part of the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association. Certainly, we're open to adding any suggestions that you might have. The reason that we go through the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association is because it is a comprehensive coverage of the province in all of the communities. I can't tell you right off the bat, although I could prepare that information for you, in terms of what ethnic newspapers are included.

**Mr. Amery:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Are there any other questions? No questions?

Then I guess, depending on what we decide, if we want to go just with what we've got, we will get a motion to approve the budget for this advertisement. If we're going to be adding some questionnaire of some sort, then obviously this budget will change. If we're going to do that, then we need to wait until our next meeting when we have the questionnaire, and then they can come up with sort of a concise way, a different layout perhaps. Then we can get the budget approved. Is that a fair comment? Is that what I'm reading? Yes? Okay. Fair enough. Thank you very much.

If there are no other questions, are there any other business items that we'd like to discuss? Some of the other sorts of detailed items

I have for discussion are hinged on what happens at the committee presentation and then when we come up with a questionnaire.

Is a two-week advertisement period sufficient? We might as well get that out of the way. Yes? Everybody okay with that? Two weeks is good enough?

Rhonda, go ahead, please.

**Ms Sorensen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to point out that with weeklies it will take approximately one week to turn around the deadlines simply because they all have different deadlines. With the dailies we require about one to two days in advance to book. Then for the weeklies I would say to add a week onto your final timeline. Does that make sense?

**The Chair:** Yeah.  
Richard, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Marz:** I think a deadline should be in the ad for receipt of submissions.

**Dr. Taft:** It is.

**Mr. Marz:** Is it?

**Dr. Taft:** It's May 21, 2010.

**Mr. Marz:** Oh, yeah. It's in big black print.

**The Chair:** That's just an example. I just want to make sure that's not taken as the ad.

**Dr. Taft:** I was just helping Richard with his eyes; he forgot his glasses.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Kyle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Fawcett:** I've asked this question, actually, of government advertising as well. Have we at any time taken advantage of what I would call cheaper social media stuff to get this out there as well?

**Ms Sorensen:** Good question. If I may, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, please.

**Ms Sorensen:** We are certainly looking at social media aspects. A lot of the newspapers do actually offer that as part of their own packages, so we approach all of them in that way. If they do offer a social media aspect for free or little charge, then we certainly take advantage of that. Certainly, the LAO itself is looking at social media opportunities that we can take advantage of, but the members themselves are also encouraged to use their own social media tools to promote any reviews.

7:30

**Mr. Fawcett:** It's just that usually it costs very little money or no money at all, and you're able to get a wider distribution.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Go ahead, Richard.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, before I was allowed to finish because of my original faux pas, I wanted to also point out that we should try to

have the public presentations completed before the end of June. Otherwise, the committee is going to be criticized for holding presentations when people are away on holidays, the only time they have with their children to get away on holidays, and that sort of thing, so I think we need to keep that in mind as well. With that in mind, if we start having meetings through the months of July and August, when members of the committee are rotating on holidays, just make sure that we can have access to teleconferencing in the committee meetings as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I've got sort of tentative timelines written down just for discussion purposes. If we were to invite the ministry and the minister on the 26th and then go from there, allow two weeks for advertisement, and the written submissions deadline would be perhaps May 17. Then the committee will summarize written submissions by May 24. The committee finalizes and starts to invite presenters towards late May, have presentations maybe June, early July, allow the research group to get their reports together in August. Then we can start meeting as a committee in September and, hopefully, be able to make the final submission by the end of September.

If you guys are okay with that, I can sort of send those dates out to you. They're not written in stone. They're sort of for discussion purposes only. If you have different suggestions, if you think we need to work on the timelines, maybe broaden the submission timeline a little bit better, it's open for discussion. It's just that I sort of had to put something together to give you a sense of what we're thinking or what is, at least, in my head to meet the final deadline.

Go ahead, Richard.

**Mr. Marz:** If we can have a deadline of the third week in May for written submissions, I don't know why we can't have a deadline for public presentations by about the third week or the fourth week in June.

**Dr. Taft:** By the end of June, yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. By the end of June and early July if need be.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, we're going to need some time in July to have a meeting or two to evaluate the presentations. If we take presentations at the first of July, we're going to be all of July doing that, and then we're pushing the staff into a tight window of August to finalize everything and to report, and that can be pretty tight for them. I'd say that we should try to stick to presentations no later than the end of June. Then we'll probably have a meeting early in July to discuss, you know, the input we had from those.

**The Chair:** Richard, what I was kind of discussing was that if we have a deadline set for written submissions – you said the third week of May; I had the 17th of May written down – then from there one week for the committee to summarize the written submissions. So set a deadline. Let's say the 24th of May. They'll summarize it. Then the committee finalizes who should be invited for presentation. Some of them may be just written presentations. Some of them may want to present, may not want to present when we pose that question. If there are 200 or whatever, X number of them, do we want them all presenting, or do we want a few presenting? There's no restriction. You know, we're not given any guideline. If we want everybody to present, by all means bring everybody in. Then we can start to set sort of a schedule. That's what we have. Then by

that time, by June, towards the end of June, this should all be done, and the researchers will have time in July and August to sort of finalize it.

**Mr. Marz:** It's like the boundary review. They put in a tight window of making an appointment for a public presentation, so I think you need a date for people to make an appointment for that public presentation. Otherwise, we won't know how we're going to manage that. You've got to have a date and say: if you want to make a public presentation, you have to advise us by such and such a date; phone in. We'll find out how many we have, and then we'll set the dates from there. You know, two days in Edmonton, two days in Calgary should be almost adequate.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Rhonda, go ahead, please.

**Ms Sorensen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Because of where the conversation was going, I just wanted to point out that we do recommend in the advertising that when we're asking for written submissions, people indicate if they're willing to make an oral presentation, and then we leave it to the committee to invite whomever they wish to talk with.

**The Chair:** The questionnaire will be part of that as well.

**Ms Sorensen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are there any other questions?

**Dr. Taft:** Just thinking towards the end, I don't know who writes the final report of this committee, but it would be good if they're involved through the whole process.

**The Chair:** Yeah. That's fine.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. That's good.

**The Chair:** Teresa, go ahead, please.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** It's not a question. It's a separate point. Is that okay?

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** My understanding of the questionnaire and the discussion guide is somewhat different. I'd just like to state my preference for a discussion guide type of format so that we can provide a bit more flexibility and space for people to respond rather than just no, yes, no. I just wanted to say that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. Anything else to discuss?

The date for the next meeting we'll send out as well.

If there are no other questions, we need a motion.

**Mr. Weadick:** Motion to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Greg. Thank you. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

[The committee adjourned at 7:37 p.m.]





